Journal of Student Wellbeing
October 2008, Vol. 2(1), 35-51.

Personal responsibility: the creation, implementation and evaluation of a school-based program

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to create, implement and evaluate a Personal Responsibility education program for high-school students. Using a constructivist framework, a five lesson program based on key themes identified by adolescents in focus groups was developed. This program was run over one term at a public high school in urban Queensland. During the term students examined and discussed notions of choices, consequences, emotional awareness, personal and social responsibilities. Feedback from students and teachers showed that they found the program to be interesting, relevant and informative for students, and to have strengthened relationships between students within a class and between students and teachers. The program offers high schools the opportunity to enhance adolescents' personal, emotional and social development.

Introduction

An important purpose of formal education is to socialise children and increase their understanding of themselves and others (Cohen & Sandy, 2003). Over the last 30 years Western educators have been encouraged to develop children's personal, social and emotional outcomes such as self-esteem, resilience, emotional intelligence and social skills. While many programs have been implemented in

primary and high schools with varying success, Goleman (2003) argued that education programs that prove to be effective in developing personal, social and emotional competence also assist children to master important skills such as self-awareness and emotional self-regulation, along with empathy and social skills.

For education programs to meaningfully change the lives of adolescents, they must build on what students already know and reflect the students' real-life experiences. As an educational theory, constructivism contends that students make meaning in their learning by actively and purposefully interacting with educational stimuli. Constructivism highlights the role of the teacher as a facilitator and guide (Berlin, 1996; Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003). Meaning is based on experience and students cognitively act on incoming information to construct and understand it. Daily, students process vast amounts of information in an attempt to make meaning. Understanding their environment and themselves allows adolescents to do that what appears to be in their best interests. While searching for meaning, students actively attend to, manipulate, organise and reject information. In this way, they do not passively receive information from the external world. All information is acted on and personalised in a complex manner, sometimes deliberately and often automatically (Berlin, 1996).

Constructivism thus lends itself fittingly to educational programs intended to teach young people about the active choices they make in life and the power they have to create their reality. The Personal Responsibility Program was designed to help adolescents to develop personal, emotional and social understandings. Despite much public comment on personal responsibility, the construct has received little theoretical and empirical attention (see Reeves, 2004; Mergler et al., 2007).

Mergler (2007: 66) sought to describe personal responsibility and to uncover its components. She defined personal responsibility as 'the ability to identify and regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and behaviour, along with a willingness to hold oneself accountable for the choices made and the social and personal outcomes generated'. When adolescents take personal responsibility they consider their choices and their potential effect before acting, lessening the chance that they will act foolishly and hurt themselves and others.

Encouraging the development of this construct in young people increases the likelihood that adolescents will make smart choices. It is particularly important to develop this construct in adolescents while they are moving away from parental influence and beginning to make their own potentially life-altering decisions (Harvey & Retter, 2002). Therefore, adolescents need to understand the responsibility they have when choosing between various options. If they appreciate that the decisions they make, and their consequences, are their own and must be owned by them, they are more likely to consider carefully before 'jumping in'. As a result, young people are more likely to treat others with respect if they appreciate that the decisions they make impact not only on their own lives but also on the lives of other people. The Personal Responsibility Program was created to help young people in schools to develop personal responsibility. This paper will discuss the creation, implementation and qualitative evaluation of the Personal Responsibility

Program at an Australian high school, and focuses on the program's design and content.

Creation of the Personal Responsibility Program

To create a program that reflected the views and understandings of adolescents, focus groups were conducted with 20 Year 11 students from two public high schools in urban Queensland. During these focus groups, students were asked questions about how they understood personal responsibility, such as what they considered the key components of the construct to be and where they did and did not take personal responsibility. The transcripts were analysed using Krueger's (1998) content analysis continuum model and key themes were identified. For detailed information on the process, analysis and outcomes of these focus groups, see Mergler and Patton (2007).

Initially, the main themes coming from the focus group data provided a framework on which to centre lesson plans. The program focused on five key themes:

- choices—understanding that we make deliberate choices and that we have the power to choose and need not be passive victims of circumstance
- consequences—appreciating that when we make our choice, we also choose the consequence
- emotional awareness—understanding and identifying emotions and exercising emotional control
- awareness of rights and responsibilities—appreciating the connection between these and understanding that the freedom afforded us is often a product of how responsibly we behave
- social responsibility—considering and developing genuine concern for how our choices and behaviour may impact on other people.

Thus the program became a series of five lessons:

1. Overview of the Personal Responsibility Program. This initial lesson introduced the notion of personal responsibility. Adolescents were challenged to consider how the construct applied to their own lives, and to identify areas in which they did, and did not, take personal responsibility. This analysis was very important, as for most adolescents this was the first time they had been asked to consider personal responsibility. Further, this lesson set the tone for the program, increased students' awareness of what to expect from it, flagged fun activities in later lessons, and started their cognitive wheels turning.
2. Choices and consequences. Adolescents engaged in a range of activities (small group work, role play and class discussion) that encouraged them to consider the choices available in a given situation, and the consequences that might result from them. Like many people, adolescents fall into the trap of only seeing one outcome for a given situation, and fail

to stop and think through the options that may be available to them. This lesson encouraged them to consider the choices available in a situation and brainstorm with others to develop a list of choices and their consequences.

3. Knowing and understanding yourself and others. Adolescents completed a personality quiz and discussed ways to identify their emotional cues. They were also encouraged to understand that different people respond differently to the same emotions and/or situations, and that this needs to be respected. In pairs, students discussed a time when they had adversely affected someone and were questioned about why they chose to respond in the way that they did.
4. Rights and responsibilities. Adolescents considered the responsibilities that came with the rights they would like to have. They also discussed personal power, the idea that they are powerful beings due to their power of choice.
5. Social responsibility. Adolescents drew their own island on a poster and, in small groups, decided on the rules their island would have. They examined how these laws protected and restricted people. Each student was given a role to play (such as a police officer or a pregnant woman) and they considered what rules were important from the perspective of each of these people. Students looked at how the actions of people within a community affected the rest of the community.

After establishing the overall theme for each lesson, activities were developed to facilitate the main components. Most of these activities were created by the principal researcher. A range of activities were informed by related values-based education activities or programs (Josephson Institute of Ethics, 1993; Gholar et al., 1996). These sources offered example questions, possible conundrums and moral dilemmas for students to discuss, and interesting ways of incorporating group, pair, whole class and individual work. While these activities and programs helped develop the activities used in the Personal Responsibility Program, no activities were taken from these programs without being heavily modified for the adolescent population they were to serve.

Each lesson was then designed in the format of a standard lesson, with aims, objectives, activities and pedagogical strategies. The lesson plans gave a clear overview of what was to be taught, why it was appropriate, what the outcomes should be, and what evaluative tools were to be used. All resource sheets needed to undertake each lesson were created. Presenting the program in this way meant that it would be in a format teachers were familiar with, so aiding their delivery.

The Personal Responsibility Program was written to conform with a constructivist framework. As such, activities in the Personal Responsibility Program were student driven and focused, scenarios were relevant to adolescents, students were encouraged to question their understanding and beliefs, and teacher intervention in most activities was minimal. Students were encouraged to take ownership of the activities by working with each other to discuss and critique ideas.

Within any classroom there are many different learning styles. A student's learning style is how they take in new information, how they engage and relate to others, and the classroom experience and environment (Grasha, 1990). To cater for this range of learning styles it was essential that the Personal Responsibility Program provided information in various ways. Lessons were structured so that the activities were a mixture of individual, pair, group and large class discussions, as well as utilising writing, drawing, discussion, acting, presenting, and video. Additionally, some activities required the students to get out of their seats and move around the classroom. This variety was expected to relieve monotony, reenergise the students, hold their interest and cater to different learning styles (Gabler & Schroeder, 2003).

To make the program relevant to adolescents (Doolittle & Camp, 1999), popular cultural resources were searched for useful stimuli. Researchers and educators espouse the use of popular culture in the classroom to engage and stimulate students with material relevant to them (Allender, 2004; Callahan & Low, 2004; Evans, 2004). Popular culture is valuable for meeting students where they are and linking newly acquired knowledge to current understandings (Doolittle & Camp, 1999). Placing important educational material in a context that links to what students understand and enjoy can also take material that may be seen as boring and transform it into something relevant and fun (Biggs & Moore, 1993). Cooper and McIntyre (1996) found that students support the use of popular culture in the classroom.

After a wide search of popular songs, televisions shows and videos, the *Spiderman* (Sam Rami, 2002, Marvel Enterprises) movie was chosen as highlighting the personal power and responsibility that adolescents have. A two minute section of this movie was used. It was expected that adolescents would be familiar with this movie and would respond favourably to its inclusion. Using media that students access voluntarily was expected to increase their desire to participate in the program, and served to give the program credibility in their eyes (Domoney & Harris, 1993). As the movie snippet was used in the fourth lesson, it was hoped that the students would look forward to this lesson and remain interested in the program. As such, Lesson 1 provided an overview of all lessons, in which the upcoming *Spiderman* video was highlighted.

Reviewers' feedback

Before implementation, the Personal Responsibility Program was reviewed by two academics in the Faculty of Education at the Queensland University of Technology in Queensland, Australia. Both academics had extensive experience in adolescent development and teaching practice and theory, and one had previously taught adolescents in secondary school. Feedback indicated that the program was concise and appropriate with lessons that reinforced the main themes. Minor adjustments to all lesson plans were suggested, such as providing time frames for each activity and listing the resources that would be needed for each lesson (see Table 7.1 for a summary of the lesson plans).

Table 7.1. A summary of the Personal Responsibility Program lesson plans

Lesson 1—overview of Personal Responsibility Program		
A)	**10 minutes –**	hand out 'Overview of PR program.' Go through length of program, each weeks topics, feedback expectation, different types of activities.
B)	**20 minutes –**	around the classroom are the words Agree, Sometimes Agree, and Disagree. Teacher reads a statement and students move to the position they support. Students discuss with others in the same position why they chose that position and briefly outline for the class their reasons.
C)	**5 minutes –**	how would you define personal responsibility? Discuss using OHT with definition.
D)	**5 minutes –**	***Step 1:*** hand out 'My list of responsibilities' activity sheet. Individually, students write down: What responsibilities do you believe you personally have for: 1) yourself, 2) your family, 3) your community, 4) the world?
	10 minutes –	***Step 2:*** students pair up with the person sitting next to them and compare and discuss their answers.
E)	**10 minutes –**	students are asked to consider the lesson they have just had and provide feedback about it on the 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet. Teachers are to collect these sheets at the end of the lesson.
Lesson 2—choices and consequences		
A)	**15 minutes –**	in small groups, students read through and discuss a scenario with a dilemma and write down the choices available to them and the possible consequences. Group makes choice and must justify.
B)	**10 minutes –**	***Step 1:*** students get into groups of three and act out a role play scenario where a difficult choice must be made.
	10 minutes –	***Step 2:*** advise students to make a decision and answer the discussion questions. Students are to discuss how they feel about the decision, making the decision, and what consequences could result from the decision.
C)	**15 minutes –**	teacher asks class for examples from their own lives or people they know where there have been difficult choices to make and consequences to consider. Discuss what choices were made, why people might make those choices; any impacts on other people?
D)	**10 minutes –**	complete 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet and collect.

Lesson 3— knowing and understanding yourself and others

A) **15 minutes –** students complete a 'Personality Quiz' and then get into groups with others who scored the same category.

B) **20 minutes –** students are given a sheet examining emotions called 'Understanding my Responses.' Students answer the questions/statements in their group and report back to the class. Teacher asks the class what they noticed about other people's responses. Were all responses the same? What does this tell us about understanding ourselves and other people?

C) **15 minutes –** students pick a partner from a different group. In pairs, students discuss a time they impacted negatively on someone due to their feelings and actions. Answer questions on 'Appreciating my impact on others' sheet, including: Why did it happen (what were they thinking, feeling etc.—what was their role in it?). What could they have done differently?

D) **10 minutes –** complete 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet and collect.

Lesson 4— rights and responsibilities

A) **10 minutes –** ask students, 'How would you define/explain/understand a right?' Discuss. Put up OHT with definition. Ask students, 'How would you define/explain/understand a responsibility?' Discuss. Put up OHT with definition.

B) **15 minutes –** students get into groups of three/four. Teacher gives each group a bag that has words in it and the 'Rights and Responsibilities' sheet. Students choose the words that they feel are their rights and they create the responsibilities that go with them.

C) **5 minutes –** ***Step 1:*** students watch section of 'Spiderman' video and answer questions: 1. What does Uncle Ben feel that Peter does not have the right to do? 2. Why does Uncle Ben feel that Peter is now in an important stage of his life? 3. Fill in the blanks on the quote that Uncle Ben says to Peter: With _____ comes great _____.

5 minutes – ***Step 2:*** Students call out answers and are asked to focus on question 3. Teacher asks: What does this statement mean? Do you agree? Why/why not? Do you think this statement applies more as you get older? Why/why not?

D)	**15 minutes –**	teacher discusses Peter having 'great power' and making choices that will define the man he becomes. Asks class, 'What do you think personal power may refer to?' Discuss. Explanation of personal power on OHT. Ask students what power and responsibilities are specific to their age/maturity. Do they have power and responsibilities now that they didn't have when they were younger?
E)	**10 minutes –**	complete 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet and collect.
Lesson 5— social responsibility		
A)	**5 minutes –**	ask students what they think social responsibility is about. Discuss. Put up OHT with definition.
B)	**20 minutes –**	***Step 1:*** Students imagine that they are the only people on an island and as a group of six they must come up with 10 rules that will determine how their island runs. Given butchers paper, felt pens, 'Create your own island' sheet with focus questions on it, and each group member gets given one card which has a role on it (police officer, pregnant woman). Students take on this role, and consider what rules/laws the person in that role would think are necessary.
	15 minutes –	***Step 2:*** In groups, students are to report their island name and their rules to the class.
C)	**10 minutes –**	teacher asks students about rules. Why do we have them? Should we follow rules? What happens when we don't follow rules? What happens when we don't take responsibility? Do we have a responsibility toward others? Do people have a responsibility toward us? What are our social responsibilities?
D)	**10 minutes –**	complete 'My thoughts and reflections on today' sheet and collect.

An important comment by one reviewer was that each lesson plan could be accompanied by a script to help teachers better understand the aims of each activity and to improve the conformity of delivery. Discussions between the researcher and her contact at the state high school in which the program was to be run had established that the program would be run concurrently in four form classes. This meant that the researcher would not be able to give each lesson to all students, and would instead rotate between each form class, co-presenting with the teacher. As such, the use of a script to guide teachers was deemed extremely valuable. Scripts for each lesson were written to highlight the aim of each activity and offer avenues for teachers to venture down to improve the students' understanding of the main themes.

The principal researcher decided that each lesson would end with 10 minutes for students and teachers to complete a feedback sheet. The feedback sheet for

students asked them to comment on the preceding lesson, including indicating something new they had learned, something that had challenged them, something that was good about the lesson, and something that was bad about the lesson. Space for additional comments was provided. This feedback sheet allowed students to articulate their concerns, ideas and suggestions to the researcher. As educators have often overlooked how students feel about their learning (Glasser, 1998; Gullota et al., 1999; Cook-Sather, 2003), the feedback sheets were to be the primary way for students to voice their opinions. The teacher feedback sheet asked teachers to comment on how they felt the lesson went and to pass on comments, observations or ideas offered by students during the lesson. This helped the researchers determine whether teachers felt comfortable with the program and whether they noticed changes in classroom dynamics or with any students.

Preparation of teachers

Before the program was implemented, teachers were trained in its delivery. A two hour training session was run by the principal researcher one week after teachers had been given the program, allowing them to familiarise themselves with it first. The training session focused on the pedagogy underpinning the program and explained why particular activities had been chosen and the aims of each lesson. The notion of personal responsibility and opinions of it were discussed. The researcher explained her interpretation of personal responsibility and showed how each lesson had been informed by this definition.

The constructivist notion of teaching was discussed with the teachers and it was stressed that the students were to be encouraged to influence the direction of each lesson. Research has shown that students sometimes resist student driven teaching, especially where they have been taught by the traditional method (Sion, 1999; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003). As students are often taught by a teacher centred approach (Sion, 1999), teachers were asked to explain to their students that they would be expected to direct the program and apply its concepts to their own lives. Additionally, it was felt that the teachers might struggle when offering students more control in the classroom. Biggs (1999) suggested that the pedagogical shift from traditional didactic teaching to student centred learning meant that teachers needed to adjust their perception of their role. Thus the researcher encouraged all teachers to consider how they could allow students greater freedom without losing control of the class. Methods of doing this included allowing students to debate ideas with each other with minimal teacher input and encouraging students to actively disagree with ideas presented by the teacher and to present competing viewpoints.

Implementation and evaluation

The program was presented in Term 2 (April–June) of the 2005 school year to approximately 100 Year 11 students at one public high school. The lessons were held fortnightly before morning tea, meaning that the program ran for 10 weeks. The classroom teacher delivered each lesson and the principal researcher rotated through the four classes over the 10 weeks. While the researcher's original intention was to

attend each form class at least once, teacher absenteeism meant that the researcher taught two classes twice, attended one class once and did not attend one class. Due to the school's timeframe of 70 minute periods, each lesson lasted 60 minutes. Five minutes were allowed for students to get to class and settle, 50 minutes was devoted to the activities and 10 to student and teacher feedback on the sheets provided, leaving five minutes to pack up.

A fundamentally important aspect of constructivist teaching involves understanding the learner's prior knowledge so as to be able to effectively integrate new knowledge (Doolittle & Camp, 1999; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003; Matthews, 2003). With this in mind, the first lesson allowed the students and the teachers to familiarise themselves with the students' understanding of personal responsibility. One activity asked students to explain how they felt about a number of statements on personal responsibility. The teacher read the statements aloud and the students moved around the room to stand by one of the three categories: agree, sometimes agree or disagree (each designated by a sign stuck on the wall). This helped the teacher understand how her or his students felt, improved the students' awareness of their own views on the subject and allowed them to see how their peers felt. Additionally, students were asked to individually consider what responsibilities they felt they had to themselves, their family, their community and their world, and were then paired up to share their answers and discuss differences and similarities.

Often, as with the first activity described above, students debated each other's viewpoints without teacher intervention. When these discussions occurred the students were encouraged to debate each other and to make room for different opinions. Some activities were created to stimulate student discussion and generate complex thought processes. These activities often centred on making difficult choices within challenging scenarios. In one activity, students were presented with a scenario in which they had an extra ticket to a music concert, and had two friends who wanted to come. Both friends were attempting to persuade the student who had the tickets to take them to the concert. The student with the tickets had to listen to their friends' arguments and make a decision. Part of this process involved them considering why they had made the decision they had and how they felt about having to make it. Students found this activity particularly difficult and did not want to make a decision at all. This then led into interesting class discussions about the struggles we face when making a challenging decision, and the choices we make in our attempt to avoid making difficult decisions.

To enhance the likelihood of students considering their viewpoint and how they arrived at it, the use of moral dilemmas was incorporated. The literature on adolescent moral and cognitive development states that moral dilemmas have traditionally been used with some success to enhance adolescent moral understanding (Kohlberg & Gilligan, 1971; Kohlberg, 1976; Piaget, 1985; Bardige, 1988; Bandura, 1991; Berzonsky, 2000; Byrnes, 2003). A moral dilemma was presented to students that highlighted a situation desirable to most adolescents. The scenario read as follows:

> You are a young actor. You have been offered a movie role that will make you famous and wealthy. There are some things you are not quite comfortable doing,

> however. The director says that if you want the role, you must do anything and everything you are requested to do, like it or not. She also reminds you that there are plenty of others waiting to take the part and have their chance at fame and fortune.

Adolescents were then asked to form small groups and list all the choices available to them in this situation and the consequences that may result from each choice. This scenario was expected to challenge adolescents morally as they would have to consider whether they would sell out for fame and fortune. It was also expected to heighten their awareness of the fact that most situations present many more choices than the obvious ones, which in this situation are to take the role or to not take the role. Interestingly, most adolescents did begin this activity saying that these were the only two obvious choices available in this situation. It took some coaxing from the teacher before the students began to realise that there were indeed a number of choices available to them. Encouraging adolescents to realise the flaws in their thinking was very powerful. It was rewarding to see them grasp the potential of additional choices and work together to brainstorm even more possibilities.

Further, this activity served to teach adolescents that consequences are linked to the choices we make and that by making a choice we also choose the consequence. Students discussed the choices they had and their consequences in small groups and then had a group decision on which choice they would make. This served to highlight the differences between people in the group and helped adolescents to understand that there are many reasons why people make the decisions they make. As this example illustrates, one activity served several purposes.

Student feedback

As this study was the first time that the Personal Responsibility Program had been run in a school, the students were asked for their feedback. Their comments were overwhelmingly positive and included:

- This is really good, fun and made me think.
- This was an informative, rewarding and interesting lesson. I really enjoyed it.
- These lessons are very informative and highly beneficial.
- This lesson helped our class get to know each other better as I learnt about the views of other class members and it helped me realise why others have made their choices.
- The lesson gets you to think about who you are and I realised a bit more about myself.
- The whole lesson worked really well and hearing what others have to say is a great learning tool.
- I learnt a lot. This lesson was awesome.
- I have enjoyed doing this program.

- Thanks heaps for all your effort. It paid off.
- Thank you for several weeks of group work.

These comments are promising and demonstrate that the Personal Responsibility Program was valuable, interesting and fun for the adolescents. The students learnt about themselves and their peers, and that it is valuable to connect with themselves and others. While the concepts that make up the program are beneficial for the students to know and understand (emotional intelligence, rights and responsibilities, etc.), the idea that self-examination is worthy of time and energy is just as valuable an idea to impart to adolescents.

Teacher feedback

The teachers commented on two main areas—the students' involvement in the program and how successful it was. With regard to student involvement the teachers commented:

- The students largely appeared to agree that they do have control over their choices and actions and that they are responsible for their actions.
- The students provided thoughtful and sensible answers and wanted to discuss ideas that the teachers found surprising and impressive in their depth.
- The students were surprised to learn that they had a vast range of choices in any given situation.
- The teachers were surprised at how willingly the students would share their group responses with the rest of the class and engage in discussions.
- Students appeared easily able to identify their rights yet struggled to identify their responsibilities.
- The students were required to think during the program and they did appear to extend their thinking to grasp ideas and concepts.
- Most students gave the program a go and appeared to enjoy it.
- The students appeared to most enjoy the activities that were active and involved group work.

In relation to the success of the program's implementation the teachers noted:

- The program was well organised and relevant to the students, and teaching it was enjoyable.
- As the program covered complex ideas and material it required adequate preparation time and teachers could not 'fly by the seat of their pants'.
- Having a fortnight between the lessons may have been too long to get a sense of continuity between each lesson.
- Five lessons were sufficient and the program would not benefit from being any longer.

- Teachers indicated that the resources provided with the program (such as lesson plans, lesson scripts and handouts) made it easy to teach in the classroom as it reflected the structure teachers follow when creating a lesson.
- The lessons progressed most successfully when the teachers shared information and examples from their own lives with the students.

Thus it appears that the program was appropriately designed for teachers and they found it rewarding to implement. Further, the teachers felt that the activities were enjoyed by the students. This was demonstrated by the students engaging with the program and responding meaningfully to the concepts presented. Of significance is the realisation from teachers that opening up about themselves was met with respect and interest by the students. Both students and teachers acknowledged that they felt the program had enhanced the relationship between them.

Researcher's reflections on program content and design

Observations by the principal researcher during and after the program was run clarified pluses and minuses in the design of the Personal Responsibility Program. In relation to the program's content, the majority of the activities were well received by the adolescents who found them engaging. However, it was noted that large classroom discussions, designed to stimulate debate, tended to be received poorly, the adolescents appearing unwilling to share their ideas with the whole class. It seemed more effective to have the students discuss ideas in smaller groups and then have them report the group's findings to the class as they were very willing to share their group's ideas. Allowing anonymity appears important when asking adolescents to discuss complex and often personal thoughts. Role play was not popular. This may have been partly due to the complicated instructions for role play, as a number of students commented on their feedback sheets that they had not completely understood how the role play was supposed to work. Adolescents may have resisted role play for similar reasons that they resisted the whole class discussion. Adolescents appear very concerned to save face, and these two activities made them vulnerable and appeared to ask too much from them in this setting.

The students were enthusiastic about the incorporation of popular culture, particularly the *Spiderman* video segment. They appeared to engage with this video and most of them commented that they loved the movie and were looking forward to that bit of the program. Additionally, they embraced the Personality Quiz, with a number of them commenting that they had heard about it previously on television (during 'Dr Phil'—a daytime talk show). Many students wrote on their feedback sheets that they thoroughly enjoyed the group work. A number of activities involved working in pairs or with small groups, and this was embraced readily by the students. The adolescents noted in their feedback sheets that this was a particularly useful learning tool as they got to hear the opinions of, and connect with, their classmates. In line with this, the students said that they enjoyed hearing the personal stories of their teachers. Both the researcher and the teachers observed that the students enjoyed activities that involved them moving around the room. A number of activities required the adolescents to get out of their seats and the physical

movement appeared to free up the students to engage more in discussion with those around them and to respond promptly to the teacher's and researcher's questions.

The constructivist underpinning of the program required students to take ownership of it and direct their own learning. In practice this was hard to achieve. This may have been partly due to the fact that the first lesson did not explain this well enough. Despite the fact that students are encouraged to engage in self-directed learning in Years 11 and 12, they were reluctant to do so. This reluctance of students to take ownership of their own learning reflects the findings of other researchers (Sion, 1999; Gabler & Schroeder, 2003). The program would have benefited from explaining this expectation more clearly to students and justifying to them why this choice was made (Lea et al., 2003).

Conclusion

The feedback from adolescents and teachers was overwhelmingly that the program was interesting, fun, valuable, and enjoyable. Students' feedback was thoughtful, indicating that they engaged meaningfully with the program. Feedback from the teachers supported the students' positive perceptions and acknowledged the teachers' enjoyment of and positive feelings toward the program. The researcher noted that the students engaged with the material and each other, and were willing to be thoughtful and reflective. As many of the concepts discussed throughout the program are weighty issues that require continual thought and reassessment, it is hoped that the Personal Responsibility Program planted seeds in the minds of these students that will grow as they do. As Year 11 students, they are beginning to experience greater freedom and will need to make important life choices. It is hoped that when making these choices they will use the skills they were encouraged to practise in the Personal Responsibility Program.

The creation of the Personal Responsibility Program means that any high school in Australia (or indeed in the English speaking world) could use it in their school. The program was designed to be teacher friendly, and thus includes lesson plans, all resources needed, and lesson scripts. As each lesson contains a feedback sheet for students and teachers, schools are able to gather qualitative feedback on the success of the program's implementation. As school administrators and teachers often express concern about the lack of personal responsibility in their students (Lickona, 1992; Reeves, 2004), this program could be used to address this concern and put the issue of personal responsibility firmly on the agenda in high schools.

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the students and teachers who participated in the program. Without the invaluable assistance of the Year 11 coordinator of the high school, this project would not have run so smoothly.